Interstate 11 Corridor
Transformative Investments in the United States
Request for Projects

A. Project Overview

What is the overall vision and goal of the project?

Representing the pioneering spirit of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, Interstate 11 represents a new north-south travel corridor connecting under served communities in the Intermountain West. The overall goal of the project is to create an Interstate 11 corridor that would connect 8 million people; improve national security by linking 25 military installations; provide vital transportation alternatives during times of national crisis; and reinvigorate the economy by creating jobs, assisting in freight movement, and providing major development opportunities.

The proposed Interstate 11 route would provide an alternate north/south corridor in the West.

Following the opening of the interstate-standard Hoover Dam Bypass Bridge in 2010, several states, including Arizona and Nevada, began working with the United States Congress to initially seek designation of an interstate route between Phoenix, Arizona and Las Vegas, Nevada. Efforts are also underway to expand this designation north to destinations in the Pacific Northwest and south to the Mexican border.

Early planning for the Interstate Highway System identified numerous routes in the heavily populated areas east of the Mississippi River. This trend has continued since the system was established in 1956 with more routes added in the eastern United States. There has been little significant addition of interstate routes in the western United States other than an extension of Interstate 70 west of Denver to Interstate 15 in Utah, and Interstate 82 between Interstates 84 and 90 in Oregon and Washington State, respecitvely. Despite these additions, population and employment growth in the West has outpaced eastern states, and the demand for travel along the few western interstate corridors has grown to where metropolitan-type congestion is common along relatively rural routes.

The introduction of Interstate 11 to the western United States highway network provides considerable benefit to the West's key overtaxed north-south corridors: Interstate 5 and Interstate 15. The burden on these two roadways not only hampers economic growth, but also exposes the West to greater security risks during times of emergency and potential natural disasters. Building Interstate 11 provides an alternative for intercity travel throughout the West without having to focus travel in a few

Interstate Highway Sytem approved in 1956.

Additions to Interstate Highway System since 1956.

corridors that traverse some of the West's largest population centers, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, and Portland. Interstate 11 not only provides needed connectivity in the West, but enhances the American transportation system, provides alternate routes (especially in times of national emergencies), and improves its reliability for better trade and commerce opportunities.

What is the geographic scale and scope of the project?

The Interstate 11 corridor of the Intermountain West is a project for linking the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas and 25 military installations. The corridor is envisioned to enhance north-south travel, alleviate parallel route congestion, and to improve the overall capability for goods movement and freight reliability. The project is estimated to encompass approximately 1,400 miles of new interstate corridor with the provision for accommodating rail, water, and power transport. The corridor also strengthens international trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico by linking West Coast ports in all three countries.

What is the background/history of the project?

A north-south interstate highway corridor in this part of the United States was not included as part of the original 42,843-mile system when President Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 authorizing construction of the Interstate Highway System. The combined population of Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas, and Reno was less than 700,000 in 1956, and the focus of interstate planners at that time was to improve connections to California in the western part of the United States. Today, the US Census Bureau estimates these communities to have about 8 million in population. Future projections indicate this corridor will continue to see significant growth, prompting the need for better surface transportation connections to accommodate not only the travel demand between these metropolitan areas, but also improved mobility for freight shipments throughout the West.

What is the current status of the project?

Elements for an Interstate 11 corridor have been emerging over time. In Arizona, the Department of Transportation (ADOT) is implementing a multiyear program for improving US-93 between Phoenix and Las Vegas by widening the roadway to four lanes and acquiring right-of-way that could allow the corridor to be constructed to interstate standards in the future. The Arizona State Transportation Board recently accepted the findings of ADOT's bqAZ: Statewide Transportation Planning Framework Program that includes the conversion of US-93 into an interstate corridor and for that interstate route to continue along the Hassayampa Freeway from Wickenburg to Casa Grande.

In Nevada, the Department of Transportation (NDOT) has already constructed portions of US-93 to interstate standards, as Interstate 515, and has cleared an environmental impact statement to extend the freeway corridor around Boulder City.

NDOT also continues to plan for improvements to US-95 between Las Vegas and Reno to connect Nevada's largest cities. Both states, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration-Central Federal Lands Division, recently opened the Mike O'Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge, providing a four lane interstate standard bypass of Hoover Dam and crossing of the Colorado River.

Who are the potential partners on the project, and what role do they play?

Developing the Interstate 11 corridor will require a broad partnership of representatives from both the public and private sectors. The following is a partial list of public sector partners:

- *Federal Agency Partners* – The United States Department of Transportation and its subordinate agencies, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration, would be the leading partners in the Interstate 11 corridor development. Other federal agencies that may provide assistance in developing the corridor include the United States Departments of Defense, Agriculture, Interior, and Commerce, and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- *State Agency Partners* – Presently, the State Departments of Transportation from Arizona and Nevada are leading the Interstate 11 effort. As planning for the corridor continues, additional partners may include the State Departments of Transportation for California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington State. In addition, other agencies from these six states would participate in the corridor's planning and implementation efforts ranging from environmental clearances to project permitting.
- *Metropolitan Planning Organizations/Councils of Governments* – The planning organizations for the four largest metropolitan areas within the corridor - Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix), Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (Las Vegas), Pima Association of Governments (Tucson), and Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (Reno) - are the key planning partners for the corridor. Additional partners may include the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Councils of Governments within the corridor's influence area that could account for another ten agencies.
- *International Partners* – As the Interstate 11 corridor is proposed as a border-to-border facility, Canadian and Mexican partners may contribute their assistance to facilitate international trade and cross-border relations. In Canada, this could include Transport Canada and the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation. Mexican partners would include Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT), the State of Sonora Department of Infrastructure and Urban Development.
- *Private-Sector Partners* – The Interstate 11 corridor has the potential for public-private-partnerships that could facilitate its construction, operation, and maintenance. In addition, private freight operators representing

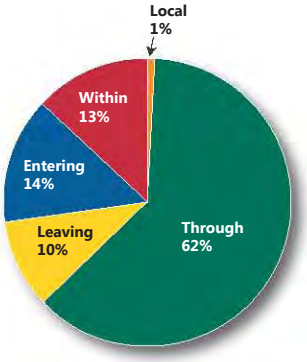
trucking and rail interests could contribute to the development of the corridor.

Who are the project stakeholders and why?

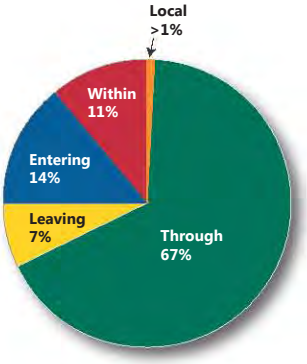
The project's stakeholders represent a broad spectrum of residents in the Intermountain West and along the Pacific Coast of the United States. Immediate stakeholders would include the more than eight million residents that reside in the metropolitan areas between Tucson, Arizona and Spokane, Washington. Their benefit from Interstate 11 includes daily use to receiving economic benefits from more efficient freight movements and less congestion.

Benefiting stakeholders include those residents along Interstate 5 from California to British Columbia, and those along Interstate 15 from California to Utah. Their corridors would see improved mobility and congestion relief due to the diversion of traffic to a parallel Interstate 11 facility.

Composition of Freight Movements



Arizona



Nevada

Source: Freight Facts and Figures 2010, US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Freight Management and Operations.

B. Projected Benefits

How does this project fit with the long-term economic development strategy for the location in which it will operate?

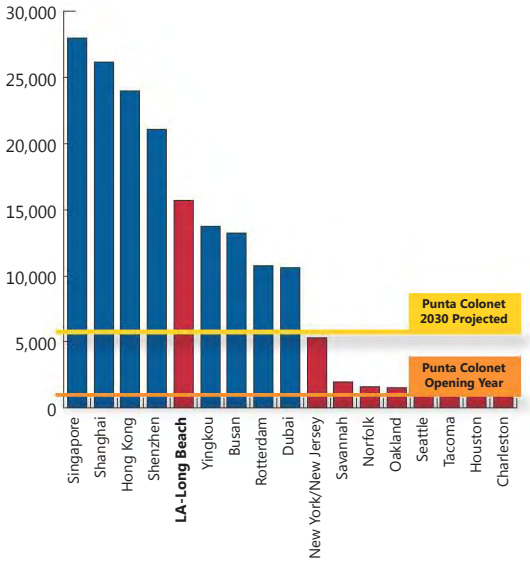
The downturn beginning in 2008 has dramatically impacted the economies of the states containing the proposed Interstate 11 corridor. As an example, both the Phoenix and Las Vegas metropolitan areas have seen some of the highest rates of property foreclosures due to the housing bust. Policy leaders in both metropolitan areas recognize the need to diversify their economies and introduce employment that would expand the economy beyond the construction base that has driven growth in the past. Independently, leaders in both metropolitan areas, as well as at the state level, have assessed the potential for broadening the economy to reduce the dependence on construction and have identified freight activities as a potential economic development area. Studies have been conducted to determine if value could be added to these freight movements and thereby improving the national supply chain by relieving burdens along the West Coast. However, the studies have noted that the large volume of freight passing through is largely due to the strong east-west movements of interstate travel in both Arizona and Nevada. A new, significant, north-south corridor would create a new alternative route that could add value to freight movements.

For much of the second half of the 20th century, the West Coast ports have provided the gateway for goods movement into and out of the United States. In particular, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have been responsible for more than 40 percent of this movement. Projections are for this movement to increase significantly as the United States population is expected to grow to 400 million by 2050. Expansion of the West Coast ports has been a difficult process as most of these

Potential Mexican port locations and relation to the southwest United States transportation network.

locations have already expanded as much as practically possible. To offset the growing appetite for North American trade, the Canadian and Mexican governments have constructed or considered adding to West Coast port capacity. In Canada, the Port of Prince Rupert in British Columbia near the Alaska border has opened and has demonstrated the benefits of additional capacity. The Mexican government has been developing plans for a port in the town of Punta Colonet, a natural deep water harbor approximately 200 miles south of San Diego, California. When constructed, Punta Colonet could attract up to half the capacity of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach with freight destined for the United States and Canada from the Far East and South America.

Given these ports in Canada and Mexico, coupled with the West Coast ports in Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Oakland, Los Angeles, Long Beach, and San Diego, there will be a breakdown in the infrastructure to accommodate a 25 percent increase in the Amer-

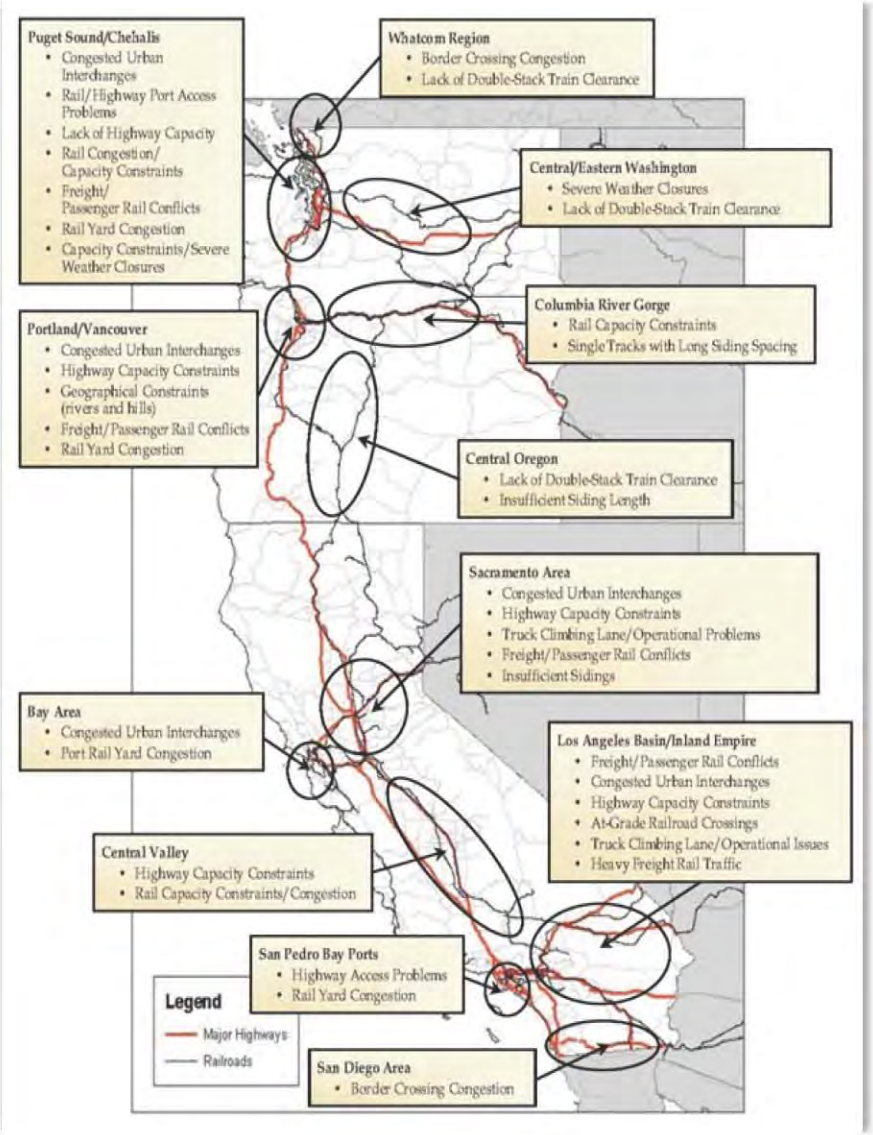


Cotainer Unit Volume at the World Ports and projected load at Punta Colonet.

Source: Freight Facts and Figures 2010 and Mexico SCT.

ican population between now and 2050. When this breakdown is viewed visually, the most dramatic concern is north-south movement where there is only one West Coast interstate highway (Interstate 5) and a single continuous rail line (operated by Union Pacific). Both have infrastructure limitations and presently experience congestion, thereby taxing the West and the national economy.

An Interstate 11 corridor provides relief and furthers long-term economic development. In the Phoenix and Las Vegas areas, the introduction of this corridor adds value to freight movements by providing opportunities for industrial, manufacturing, and warehousing. Throughout the West, Interstate 11 provides another corridor for north-south movements and access to key all-weather corridors in the southern United States along Interstate 10 and Interstate 40.



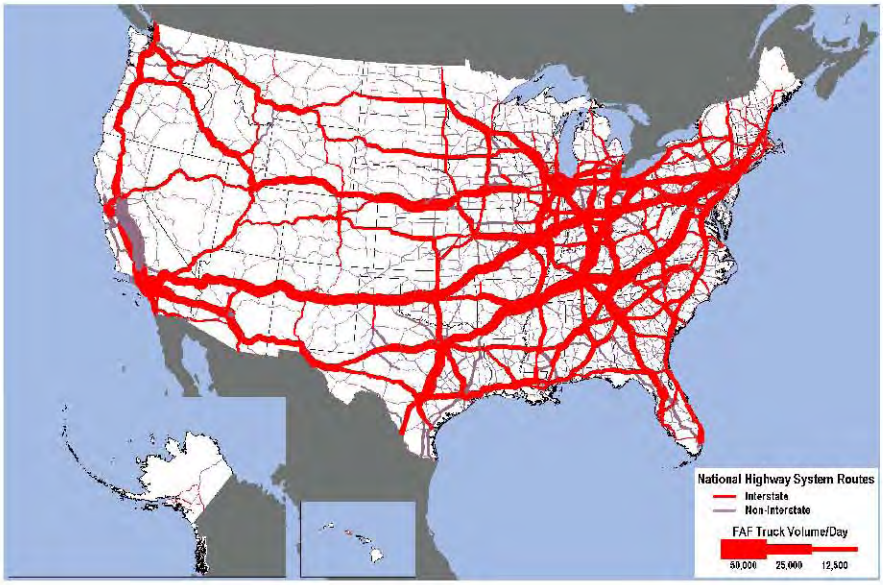
West Coast Bottlenecks.
Source: West Coast Corridor Coalition.

What are the project economic, environmental and social benefits of the proposed project?

In addition to the economic benefits for reliable freight movements, commerce, and trade, Interstate 11 is poised to provide an alternative route for the West to improve security and emergency linkages. As demonstrated in Japan in 2011, massive earthquakes are a real possibility with considerable consequences for the economic and social infrastructure. There is considerable evidence that fault lines along the Pacific Coast could result in a similar earthquake that could severely impact transportation linkages and cause considerable economic impact to the United States.

Although the predominant flow for freight is east-west, there is a continuing need to improve north-south connections to improve commerce. Presently, only one corridor links the West Coast ports, with little system redundancy for alternative routes.

Interstate 5 and its parallel rail route, have seen closures in the past. The most significant closures include the Toutle River bridge closure during the Mount St. Helens natural disaster in 1980, and earthquake damage to the California SR-14 traffic interchange in 1971 and 1994. With little redundancy in the system, the freight detours are considerable, for example, the Toutle River bridge closure added two days of travel. Interstate 11 does not just provide better connections in the West, it can be an integral and necessary linkage in times of national disasters and emergencies.



Projected 2040 Commercial Vehicle Flows.
Source: US DOT, Federal Highway Administration.

Another connection that the Interstate 11 corridor can provide is a link to more than 25 military installations throughout the West. Over land, the best high-speed routes for military transport are along Interstate 5 and its parallel rail routes. This linkage is through some of the most congested urban areas in the United States, and at times of national emergency, easily could be compromised. By building Interstate 11, connections between these installations become more reliable.

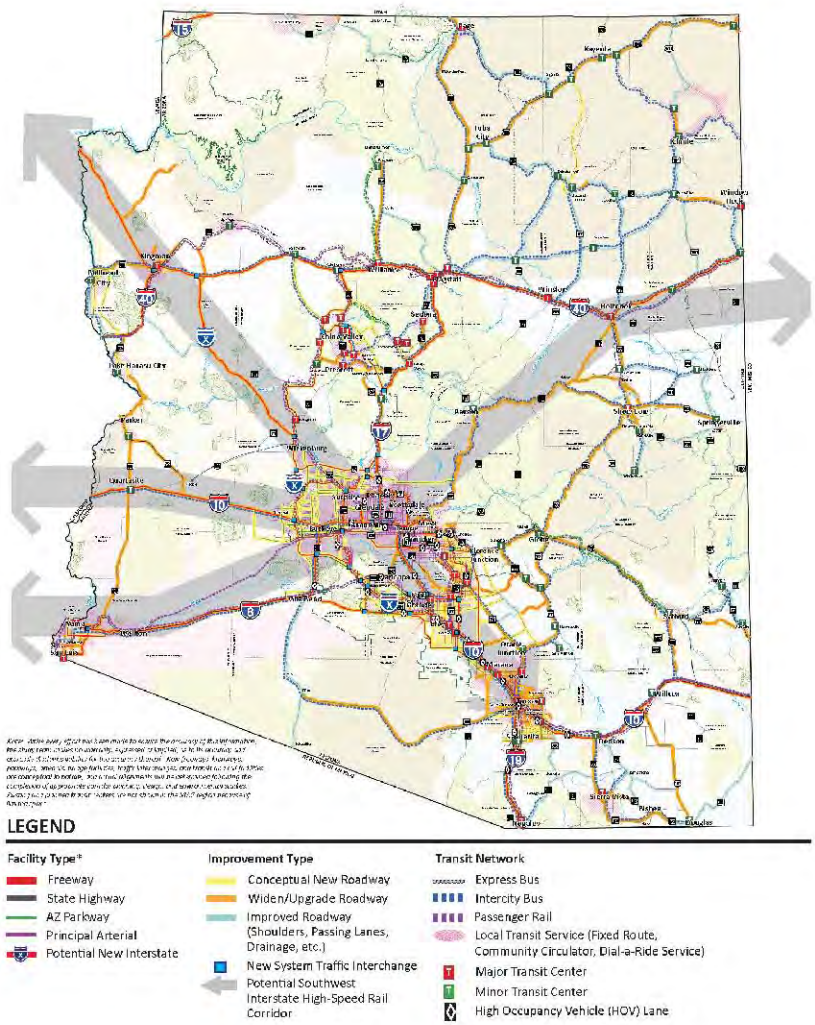
Interstate 11 corridor in relation to military installations.

Has a feasibility study been conducted on the project?

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Arizona Department of Transportation in 2007 launched a long-term transportation planning effort for the Phoenix Metropolitan Area and the State of Arizona entitled "bqAZ: Building a Quality Arizona." As part of this effort, transportation framework studies were completed identifying the long-range transportation vision. In 2008 and 2009, the MAG Regional Council accepted the findings of the framework studies, and subsequently incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan as an illustrative corridor, the 152-mile Hassayampa Freeway corridor that

represents the beginning segment of Interstate 11. Following in 2010, the Arizona State Transportation Board accepted the findings of the Statewide Framework Study, which identified a proposed interstate corridor along the Hassayampa Freeway and the replacement of US-93 as a freeway and future interstate route in Arizona. Together, these actions identified Interstate 11 in Arizona.

In Nevada, various committees of the State Legislature took up the matter of a proposed interstate corridor connecting Las Vegas and Phoenix. In 2010, the Assembly House Development and Promotion of Logistics and Distribution Centers and Issues Concerning Infrastructure and Transportation studied the matter of Interstate 11, and drafted a resolution asking Congress and the Federal Highway Administration, United States Department of Transportation, to designate US-93 as future Interstate 11. The resolution proclaimed that the interstate highway would begin at the border of Mexico (south of Tucson, Arizona), continue through Las Vegas, Nevada, and Reno, Nevada, and end at the border of Canada (north of Seattle, Washington). By designating this as an Interstate Highway, it would connect to the Interstate 40 east-west corridor and assist in making Nevada the distribution and manufacturing "Capital of the West." In 2011, the State Legislature passed Assembly Joint Resolution No. 6, from the Senate Committee on Transportation and the Assembly Committee on Commerce and Labor, requesting that Congress and the Federal Highway Administration designate a portion of US-93 as an interstate highway.



bqAZ (Building a Quality Arizona): Statewide Transportation Planning Framework
Source: Arizona Department of Transportation

No formal feasibility study has been conducted at this time for the entire corridor. The State Departments of Transportation for Arizona and Nevada, in cooperation with the metropolitan planning organizations for Phoenix (Maricopa Association of Governments) and Las Vegas (Regional Transportation Commission of South-

ern Nevada), are beginning a multi-state look at the corridor to address the feasibility and to develop a planning framework for the segment between Phoenix and Las Vegas. The study will also address the route south of Phoenix and north of Las Vegas and engage the State Departments of Transportation for California, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington State. Partial funding of this study has been made possible by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

Looking forward 25 years, how would this project have a measurable impact on its region and/or the nation?

According to the American Highway Users Alliance, the interstate system has returned more than six dollars in economic productivity for each dollar it has cost. As the Interstate 11 corridor provides a new link in the West, the same magnitude of return can be anticipated. Other benefits that can be expected by the corridor's construction can include:

- Reduce production costs and increase economic connectivity by providing travel time savings and increased mobility.
- Reduce vehicle emissions and operating costs by reducing congestion and improving roadway geometrics.
- Reduce roadway maintenance costs by replacing old routes with new or rebuilt facilities and shifting traffic from older facilities to new construction.
- Promote economic development, making less expensive land more accessible to the nation's transportation system.
- Improve interregional access and freight movement reliability, making both labor and capital more efficient.
- Generate construction and related jobs while the facility is being built, and increase employment through the development of new and expanded businesses that benefit from improved accessibility and more efficient transportation.
- Maintain international economic competitiveness through a strong transportation infrastructure. It is estimated that China's expressway system exceeded the United States Interstate System length late during the first quarter of 2011.
- Provide economic gains from improved safety. Interstate level facilities are the safest component of the na-

A.J.R. 6

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6—
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND LABOR

(ON BEHALF OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S SUBCOMMITTEE TO STUDY THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF LOGISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION CENTERS AND ISSUES CONCERNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION)

MARCH 24, 2011

Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

SUMMARY—Requests that Congress and the Federal Highway Administration designate a portion of U.S. Route 93 as an interstate highway. (BDR R-171)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State: No.

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging the Secretary of Transportation of the United States Department of Transportation to designate U.S. Highway No. 93 from Phoenix to Las Vegas as a future Interstate System route.

Legislative Counsel's Digest:

Federal law provides that the Secretary of Transportation of the United States Department of Transportation is authorized to make modifications to the National Highway System, and to designate an existing highway as a future Interstate System route. (23 U.S.C. § 103) This resolution urges the Secretary of Transportation to designate U.S. Highway No. 93 from Phoenix, Arizona, to Las Vegas, Nevada, as a future Interstate System route as part of a proposed Interstate 11.

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 to authorize and fund construction of the Interstate Highway System; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995, which empowered the Secretary of Transportation of the United States Department of Transportation to

Nevada Assembly Joint Resolution No. 6
Source; Nevada State Legislature

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2009 THE ARIZONA REPUB

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

EUGENE C. PULLIAM JOHN ZIDICH

EDITORIALS REPRESENT the opinion of the newspaper, whose Editorial Board consists of: John Zidich, Joanna Allhands, Monica Alonzo-Dunsmoor, Steve Benson, Phil Boas, Jennifer Dukes, Cindy Hernandez, Kathleen Ingley, Robert Leger, Randy Lovely, Doug MacEachern, Robert Robb, Bob Schuster, Linda Valdez and Ken Western

THE ISSUE: INTERSTATE TO LAS VEGAS

Traffic heads west on Wickenburg Way in Wickenburg. Plans for a new interstate could ease some congestion on the way to Nevada.

NEW INTERSTATE WOULD MAKE ARIZ. CENTER OF TRADE

A new highway between Phoenix and Las Vegas has a fast-car appeal.

But there's a lot more to what some people are calling Interstate 11 than being able to make a weekend run for the Strip.

A north-south transit corridor, with a metro-Phoenix bypass, positions Arizona as part of a regional and international trade zone. It lets Arizona build on the economic advantages of its border with Mexico, a geographic attribute that's too often seen as little more than a source of illegal activity.

Arizona serves as a gateway for Mexican produce, which accounts for half of the fresh fruit and

Currently, about 3 million people travel from Arizona to Las Vegas each year, according to a story by Republic reporter Sean Holstege.

The Arizona Department of Transportation says that without new freeways, it will take five hours to get out of Phoenix by 2050. That will drive locals loco and turn Arizona's trade route into a slow-and-go nightmare.

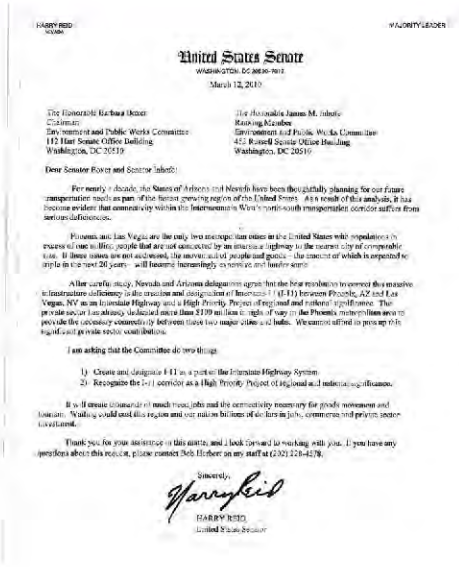
Finding the money for a transit corridor is harder than listing the benefits. That's one reason planning experts say it may not even begin for 40 years.

Yet there is strong private interest in making this happen. Tom Hennessy is general manager for Douglas Ranch, a 37,000-acre

Arizona Republic Editorial, September 20, 2009
Source: The Arizona Republic

tion's highway system; reducing traffic accidents, saving lives and reducing injuries.

- Improve security by linking key defense facilities and economic centers, as well as providing system redundancies in case of geologic and other natural events.
- Coordinate and unify the vision for the long-term development of a future multistate transportation corridor.



HARRY REID
NEVADA

MAJORITY LEADER

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

March 12, 2010

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee
452 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer and Senator Inhofe:

For nearly a decade, the States of Arizona and Nevada have been thoughtfully planning for our future transportation needs as part of the fastest growing region of the United States. As a result of this analysis, it has become evident that connectivity within the Intermountain West's north-south transportation corridor suffers from serious deficiencies.

Phoenix and Las Vegas are the only two metropolitan cities in the United States with populations in excess of one million people that are not connected by an interstate highway to the nearest city of comparable size. If these cities are not addressed, the moves and of people and goods – the amount of which is expected to triple in the next 20 years – will become increasingly expensive and harder some.

After careful study, Nevada and Arizona delegations agree that the best resolution to correct this massive infrastructure deficiency is the creation and designation of Interstate-11 (I-11) between Phoenix, AZ and Las Vegas, NV as an Interstate Highway and a High Priority Project of regional and national significance. The private sector has already dedicated more than $100 million in right of way in the Phoenix metropolitan area to provide the necessary connectivity between these two major cities and hubs. We cannot afford to pass up this significant private sector contribution.

I am asking that the Committee do two things:

1) Create and designate I-11 as a part of the Interstate Highway System.
2) Recognize the I-11 corridor as a High Priority Project of regional and national significance.

It will create thousands of much more jobs and the connectivity necessary for goods movement and tourism. Waiting could cost this region and our nation billions of dollars in jobs, commerce and private sector investment.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter, and I look forward to working with you. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Bob Herbert on my staff at (202) 228-4578.

Sincerely,

Harry Reid

HARRY REID
United States Senator

Senate Majority Leader
Harry Reid, March 12, 2010

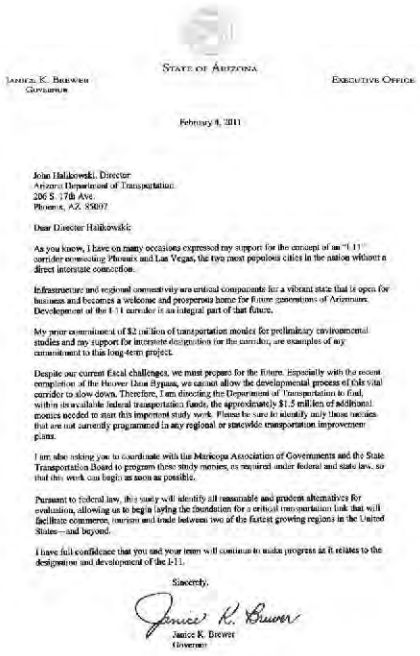
C. Financial Assessment

What are the specific project economics? How much will the project cost? How long will the development period be? What are the expected revenues and expenses?

Costs for the corridor have not been established at this time. However, using unit pricing for urban and rural freeway construction, it is estimated that this corridor would cost between $30 billion and $40 billion.

The development time for the corridor is also unknown. Historically, construction of shorter, urban freeway corridors has taken between seven and fifteen years depending upon the level of construction effort and potential environmental impacts. From pure speculation, the development period could take numerous decades. In perspective, it is interesting to note that construction of the 1,381 miles of Interstate 5 through California, Oregon, and Washington State took 23 total years of construction from the time the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed. Similarly, construction of 1,433 miles of Interstate 15 through California, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Montana was accomplished in 34 years.

The physical location of the Interstate 11 corridor itself will also figure into the ultimate cost for its construction and implementation. It is important to note that this corridor will pass through some of the highest concentrations of federal land ownerhip. It would be important to explore leveraging these federal lands as a means for offsetting costs and as incentive for attracting private sector funds in its construction.



STATE OF ARIZONA

JANICE K. BREWER
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

February 4, 2011

John Halikowski, Director
Arizona Department of Transportation
206 S. 17th Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Director Halikowski:

As you know, I have on many occasions expressed my support for the concept of an "I-11" corridor connecting Phoenix and Las Vegas, the two most populous cities in the nation without a direct interstate connection.

Infrastructure and regional connectivity are critical components for a vibrant state that is open for business and becomes a welcome and prosperous home for future generations of Arizonans. Development of the I-11 corridor is an integral part of that future.

My prior commitment of $2 million of transportation monies for preliminary environmental studies and my support for interstate designation for the corridor, are examples of my commitment to this long-term project.

Despite our current fiscal challenges, we must prepare for the future. Especially with the recent completion of the Hoover Dam Bypass, we cannot allow the developmental process of this vital corridor to slow down. Therefore, I am directing the Department of Transportation to find, within its available federal transportation funds, the approximately $1.5 million of additional monies needed to start this important study work. Please be sure to identify only those monies that are not currently programmed in any regional or statewide transportation improvement plans.

I am also asking you to coordinate with the Maricopa Association of Governments and the State Transportation Board to program these study monies, as required under federal and state law, so that this work can begin as soon as possible.

Pursuant to federal law, this study will identify all reasonable and prudent alternatives for evaluation, allowing us to begin laying the foundation for a critical transportation link that will facilitate commerce, tourism and trade between two of the fastest growing regions in the United States—and beyond.

I have full confidence that you and your team will continue to make progress as it relates to the designation and development of the I-11.

Sincerely,

Janice K. Brewer

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Arizona Governor Janice Brewer,
February 4, 2011

What is the proposed financing structure for this project and why?

As this corridor is in the conceptual phase, no definitive financing structure has been established. Current plans are to obtain the corridor designation so that subsequent planning and environmental studies can occur to identify the methods for financing corridor construction and operation. It is anticipated that designation of an interstate corridor

would allow it to fall into subsequent transportation funding programs by the federal government and corresponding state programs in future years.

What are the financial costs and overall benefits of the proposed projects, and how are these quantified?

Costs for Interstate 11 have not been established at this time. If designation is identified in the immediate future, studies would be conducted to identify the costs and potential benefits.

How is risk shared among stakeholders (private operators and developers, local and regional governments, taxpayers, etc.) in the project? Which of the stakeholders identified bear the financial loss if the project performs below expectations?

Given the current state of financing transportation infrastructure in the United States, it is conceivable that portions of the Interstate 11 corridor could be constructed and operated as user financed facilities. It is also possible that these portions could be developed as public-private partnerships where risk is shared between the public and private sectors. However, given the early development phase of this corridor, it is unknown how these future agreements may be structured and how risk will be assigned. It is important to note that using public-private partnerships will require major up-front capital investments with an uncertain, long-term economic return period.

A much-needed interstate - Thursday, July 16, 2009 | 2:06 a.m. - Las... http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2009/jul/16/much-needed-inter...

Las Vegas Sun
Sun editorial:

A much-needed interstate

Obama administration should back proposal to link Las Vegas with Phoenix

Thursday, July 16, 2009 | 2:06 a.m.

The nation's interstate highway system has proved since it was established in the 1950s to be a highly effective way of connecting cities. The convenience of interstate driving, with its wider lanes, better signs, higher speed limits and absence of traffic signals, makes traveling on lesser roads seem like a chore.

That is why it is incomprehensible that two of the largest cities in the Southwest, Las Vegas and Phoenix, are not connected by an interstate highway.

The two cities share a regional bond that would grow stronger if there were a more convenient way for motorists to travel between the two points. Although Arizona has made efforts in recent years to improve U.S. 93 from Interstate 40 to Phoenix, it is still nowhere near the quality of an interstate, a point officials in that state acknowledge.

That is why it was encouraging to read a story Wednesday by Jean Reid Norman in the Las Vegas Sun that governments on both sides of the state line are backing a proposed Interstate 11 that would follow the U.S. 93 corridor from Las Vegas to Phoenix.

The need for an interstate linkage was one of the major transportation needs the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank, identified in a report last year on this part of the country.

By decreasing the amount of time it would take to drive between the two cities, I-11 could encourage more tourism. The highway could also help Las Vegas attract more product distribution centers and other industries that would benefit from interstate links to Los Angeles, San Diego and Salt Lake City, as well as to Phoenix.

Highway improvements are among the priorities supported by the congressional delegations of Nevada and Arizona, and we would encourage the Obama administration to recognize the urgency of the proposed interstate and place it high on the list of infrastructure projects that deserve funding.

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Las Vegas Sun, July 16, 2009

D. Barriers

What are the known or potential legislative, financial, institutional, corporate, administrative, or tax-related barriers to the proposed project?

Projects of this scale are a challenge at all levels in their development and ultimate construction. Clearly, the most challenging aspect will be obtaining the funding necessary for the corridor's construction and eventual operation and maintenance. Presently, this is a considerable challenge when the current transportation program for the United States is unknown. At its conception, the Interstate Highway System was envisioned to be financed, constructed, maintained and operated through the administration of the Highway Trust Fund that was funded by a user fee on motor fuels. This model has held for more than fifty years.

However, several factors have emerged that have compromised the viability of the Highway Trust Fund in its role as the primary source for funding the Interstate 11 corridor. First, the user fees on gasoline have been a fixed rate per gallon that has not kept pace with inflation. Second, the fuel efficiency of the national fleet has im-

proved dramatically over time, and is anticipated to improve even further through recent proposed higher standards, thereby lowering contributions to the Highway Trust Fund. Third, it is conceivable that future users of the Interstate 11 corridor may use vehicles that are not powered by fossil fuels, and thus not contribute to the Highway Trust Fund. Given these factors, it is well understood that the current model for financing interstate highways, including the proposed Interstate 11 corridor, is not a reliable funding source. Other funding means will be needed to develop this route, and these means may require legislative actions to allow federal, state, and/or local agencies to participate.

Another barrier to the Interstate 11 corridor will be the environmental planning and clearances that will be needed to facilitate its construction. Since the enactment of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969, projects of this significance have been subject to environmental studies that consider more than 25 planning factors in development of a project. While NEPA has certainly had its positive impacts in developing transportation facilities that minimize their impacts on the environment, the act also has the potential to considerably slow the process of building new transportation facilities. Portions of the Interstate 11 corridor will pass through environmentally sensitive areas of the Intermountain West and the planning of this facility will need to incorporate NEPA planning and mitigation in its eventual construction.

A third barrier to the Interstate 11 corridor will be the constructability of the facility itself. Depending upon the chosen route for the corridor north of Las Vegas, Interstate 11 will pass through some of the most rugged terrain in the United States. In the development of previous interstate routes, mountainous terrain was very formidable and often stalled or stopped their construction. For example, as Interstate 70 in Colorado's Glenwood Canyon was one of the last mainline routes to be developed, it was eventually constructed and opened to traffic in the 1990s, albeit with compromised design standards to those originally envisioned for Interstate Highway System.

What potential solutions do you envision for overcoming these barriers?

Funding of transportation facilities will continue to be a subject for the United States to consider, and while the task may appear daunting, it should not deter the vision for constructing Interstate 11. Several states in the Interstate 11 corridor have passed legislation to allow the development of roadways to make up for gaps in available funding for the Highway Trust Fund. Arizona and California have allowed local agencies to use sales tax funding for the construction of needed freeway corridors. Oregon is conducting pilot programs on vehicle-miles of travel pricing as an alternative to the gas tax for transportation funding. With the exception of Idaho, all states in the Interstate 11 corridor have legislation enabling public-private partnerships. It makes sense that a combination of these programs, in addition to traditional Highway Trust Fund contributions, could see the development of Interstate 11.

In addressing the environmental clearance barrier, future efforts should be directed to engaging the latest techniques for streamlining the process. For example, the Interstate 73 corridor in South Carolina used computerized techniques that mapped environmentally sensitive areas well in advance of defining the final centerline for the roadway. These sensitive areas were mapped in cooperation with all environmental stakeholders which led to a Record of Decision for the corridor in fewer than 30 months from project initiation. Techniques such as these prevent the corridor from being mired in an administrative process that could have prevented or even prohibited the eventual construction of Interstate 73. These same techniques are available for immediate use on Interstate 11.

Construction techniques and constructability options are evolving. A clear demonstration is the recent opening of the Hoover Dam Bypass Bridge between Arizona and Nevada. This bridge, which has been identified as part of the Interstate 11 route, crosses what was once thought of as formidable barrier of the Colorado River. These construction techniques used for the Hoover Dam Bypass Bridge were considered futuristic at the time Interstate 70 was constructed in Glenwood Canyon in the early 1990s. This bridge was recently opened for traffic in 2010 to provide a reliable connection between Arizona and Nevada, and also remove a potential national security threat by rerouting traffic off Hoover Dam. Construction of the entire Interstate 11 corridor will require these evolving construction techniques.

Hoover Dam Bypass Bridge, opened to traffic October 2010.

Are there specific project-related challenges you like the Advisory Board to focus on and consider?

Planning for the Interstate 11 corridor is very much in the early conceptual phase. While the corridor at an anecdotal level makes sense for the West, there are numerous actions, most of which have been identified in this document, that will need to occur before construction can become a reality. The most important of

these will be long-range feasibility studies to tie down costs and quantify benefits for decision makers to consider.

What Interstate 11 can mean for the Intermountain West is considerable. Although the potential economic benefits, a more reliable route, or an alternative in times of national emergencies represent considerable opportunities, the biggest opportunity is for the Intermountain West community of states, metropolitan areas, counties and cities to partner and plan for a new infrastructure asset. The advent of Interstate 11 could mean a corridor that serves vehicular, rail, power and water transport that meets the goals for sustainable and livable communities in the region it serves.

Potential Interstate 11 corridor alternative routes and international trade connections.